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Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 207, 275 and Corr.1 and 299)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/61/270)

Launch of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against children

1. **The Chairman** said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/138, an in-depth study of violence against children within the family, schools, alternative-care institutions and detention facilities, the workplace and communities had been carried out under the leadership of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Independent Expert appointed by the Secretary-General. The recommendations in the study (A/61/299) were welcome. States were urged to prohibit all forms of violence against children and address its root causes. Children were the most vulnerable members of society; no violence against children was justified.

2. **Ms. Al Khalifa** (President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly) said that work on the study had been inclusive, involving all regions and stakeholders, including representatives of Governments, the United Nations, regional bodies, parliamentarians, civil society and children themselves. Violence affected children everywhere, regardless of race, class or culture. Some children were particularly vulnerable owing to age, sex or characteristics such as disability or social status. There was an urgent need for an international partnership to identify and address the root causes and establish mechanisms to prevent violence against children.

3. **Mr. Lopes** (Assistant Secretary-General and Director for Political Affairs, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, said that the study on violence against children had been led by an independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). He welcomed the Acting Director-General of WHO, Dr. Nordström, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman and the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Khan Williams.

4. The study showed that violence against children knew no boundaries and was invisible, unpunished and sometimes even condoned or endorsed by social norms and national law. That had to stop. No forms of violence could be justified or accepted. The study provided a picture of the impact of violence on children and proposed recommendations for preventing and responding to it. It described various types of violence experienced in the family, schools, care and justice institutions, the workplace and communities. It had been a great challenge for the study to break down the walls of silence that frequently surrounded violence. Very little was known about how to detect and report cases of violence. The idea that parents, teachers and caregivers had unlimited rights in the upbringing of children weakened approaches to curb and prevent abuses within homes, schools and State institutions.

5. The study concluded that violence against children was not inevitable and that it could and must be prevented. States must invest in evidence-based policies and programmes to address factors which gave rise to violence against children.

6. The General Assembly would give thorough consideration to the study and its recommendations, which highlighted the urgency of acting at the national and international levels to protect the right of children to be safe from all forms of violence. The international community, Governments and civil society shared the responsibility of implementing and following the recommendations in the report. Children expected no less. It was a pleasure to welcome on behalf of the Secretary-General the work done by Mr. Pinheiro.

7. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children) said that the Secretary-General had appointed him to lead the study, and that he had received significant support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and WHO. He would now present the key findings and recommendations of the study (A/61/299), which were the result of a participatory process.

8. Violence against children was a broad and pervasive problem. In 2002, 53,000 children had died

as a result of homicide. During the same year, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 had experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence. Much violence against children was implicitly condoned by society or legally sanctioned and remained hidden or unrecorded.

9. The vulnerability of children to violence was linked to their age. Young children were at greatest risk of physical violence, while sexual violence predominantly affected adolescents. Boys were at greater risk of physical violence, while girls were at greater risk of sexual violence, neglect and forced prostitution. Violence against children was directly linked to discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes and was exacerbated by such factors as poverty, political instability and conflict.

10. The central message of the study was that no violence against children could be justified and that all violence against children could and must be prevented. Too often, efforts to address violence against children were reactive and fragmented.

11. Prevention must be a priority, with significant attention paid to underlying causes and risk factors. Attitudes that condoned or normalized violence against children must be changed, with particular attention paid to the gender aspect. Sensitive and high-quality legal, health and social services would be required in order to achieve that goal, and States should implement systematic national data collection on violence against children.

12. Preventing and responding to violence against children required the end of the authoritarian relationship between adults and children and the end to justifications of all assaults against children, not only those considered extreme. Tradition and discipline were not reasons to commit violent acts against children.

13. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)) said that maltreatment of children led to dangerous long-term conditions such as depression, suicidal behaviour and increased rates of cardiovascular disease, cancer and sexually-transmissible diseases. Child victims of violence often continued the cycle of violence after becoming adults. But the cycle could be stopped. Since violence against children followed certain predictable patterns, it could be prevented.

14. Dozens of countries had recently launched violence prevention programmes and were engaging in capacity-building to prevent violence. WHO would soon issue a report enabling countries to implement the recommendations in the study. Health workers were being trained to respond to maltreatment of children, to measure its extent and consequences and to prevent it by working with parents and caregivers.

15. Given the strong relationship between poverty and violence, the significance of the Millennium Development Goals could not be overestimated.

16. The study was unique in integrating public-health tools and human rights. WHO fully supported the suggestions included therein.

17. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that violence against children was often committed by those close to them, such as family members, teachers, spouses and schoolmates. Bullies often caused girls to stay away from school. Sexual violence spread HIV/AIDS, with girls far more vulnerable than boys. Some 82 million under-age wives were at risk of abuse from adult husbands. Over 100 million girls had undergone female genital cutting. Young female domestic workers were very often the object of violence in the homes where they worked. Child prostitution and pornography constituted another form of violence against children. Children in institutional care were particularly vulnerable to violence from other children and from adults who were supposed to care for them.

18. In many parts of the world there were no systems for reporting or investigating violence against children, and where official systems existed, they often dramatically underestimated the nature of the problem.

19. In South Africa, there were now innovative one-stop centres to aid victims of sexual violence. In Senegal, more than 1,600 villages had committed to ending female genital cutting and early marriage. In Nepal, over 200 paralegal centres worked to prevent violence against children and women. It was important to have child-accessible reporting systems and legal systems which functioned well.

20. **Ms. Khan Williams** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the role of non-governmental organizations in the study had been critical. NGOs had ensured full participation of children in the study. Children had spoken with

clarity and courage about their experiences of violence, and their statements grounded the study in reality. They expected adults to take remedial action.

21. The devastating impact of violence on children made it imperative to change the way in which it was addressed. No country and no society were immune. Of course, there were clear risk factors, just as there were some protective factors. More research was needed, country by country, but the essential facts, gathered meticulously through a participatory process, were now known. The study also showed that such violence was completely unjustifiable and all of it preventable.

22. Prevention was critical and could be achieved through national legislation and its implementation and through international cooperation. Every child had a right to a life free from violence. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supported the recommendations contained in the study and advocated structured, well-defined and focused follow-up. Children should never receive less protection than adults. Denial of children's fundamental rights often went hand in hand with denial of their dignity and of respect for them. The study highlighted the equality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and the importance of comprehensive approaches to the problem.

23. **Ms. Mayo Puala** (Youth participant), speaking on behalf of the world's youth, recounted stories of children from different parts of the world who had suffered from poverty, child labour, sexual abuse, armed conflict and harassment. It was the responsibility of the international community to act on behalf of children and to speak for those who had no voice. The time had come to desist from trivializing and denying violence, which existed in the home, school, workplace and streets. The same was true of sexual violence: indifference to incest, paedophilia and prostitution had assumed disturbing proportions. Children were also conscripted into armed forces in violation of their rights and of the international conventions ratified by their countries. Certain categories of children, already vulnerable, were made increasingly so through discrimination and exclusion.

24. Traditional and religious practices, such as female genital mutilation, dowry, child marriage and bonded labour, were among the worst and most common violations of children's rights. Given the amplitude and dramatic consequences of such violence, children no longer tolerated the excuses made by the perpetrators. Everyone had a duty to society and to make the world a better place in which to live. The Convention on the Rights of the Child endowed young people with the right of participation, but such participation was largely discouraged.

25. Governments had a responsibility to stop and prevent all violence against children and to incorporate recommendations to that effect into their national plans, to reform legislation and to ensure children's participation in decision-making at all levels. They must endeavour to re-educate society and create a vast and accessible network of child protection for all children. United Nations agencies and NGOs, families and communities, the police, the media, the private sector and children and young people themselves must also assume responsibility for preventing violence against children.

26. Noting that a world without violence would eradicate many global problems, she said that the study was just the beginning of a complex worldwide process of eliminating practices harmful to children. In conclusion, she urged those present to recall their own childhood, to consider what they wished for their own children and to seek to create a brighter future for all children because to hurt children was to hurt the world.

27. **The Chairman** opened the floor for questions.

28. **Crown Prince Haakon** (Norway) said that the level and extent of violence against the world's children compelled the international community to take urgent action against that silent emergency. It was his honour to serve as a bridge between the international launch of the study and the launch taking place in Norway that same day.

29. Speaking from his experience as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, he said he had met many children at risk of violence around the globe and was convinced that countries could prosper only if the voices of children were heard. Combined efforts were urgently needed to create a safer and more just world, addressing the root causes of the phenomenon and following best practices as recommended in the study, because violence against children was also undermining efforts to achieve the Goals.

30. The proposed establishment and strengthening of comprehensive national child-protection systems would be instrumental in responding to violence against children. A significant change in attitudes was crucial to affording all children a life free from violence, a requirement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To that end, everyone must assume the role of caregiver and take immediate action to make homes, schools, communities and institutions safer for children. The study was unique in its enlistment of children, who now counted on effective follow-up; they must not be let down. He called for the strongest possible support for the principles and recommendations spelled out in the study and for effective action at the national, regional and global levels to create a world fit for children in the coming generation. In conclusion, he asked what concrete action Governments could take to remedy the failure to listen to children.

31. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) pointed out that it was in the developing countries, especially in Africa, that children most suffered from poverty and the consequences of armed conflict. Violence hampered the development and full flowering of the child. Her country had enacted laws to combat that scourge and had created mechanisms and programmes for establishing children's rights and creating a safe environment for them. Her delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in the study and hoped that they would be effectively implemented. Since violence against children was rife throughout the world, she would like to know what other ways the international community could find in order to put an end to that cruel situation.

32. **Ms. Lintonen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the study had adopted an integrated approach to violence against children. She asked the Independent Expert to suggest ways of changing the social acceptance of such violence, which led to a great deal of the violence in the world today. Regarding the recommendations concerned with dialogue between States and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, she wondered whether it would be useful to combine best practices on an international database for use in elaboration of national policies. She also sought further information on ways in which States could take the gender perspective into account in national policies on violence against children.

33. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the study could hardly be described as "in-depth" when it had failed to address the issue of child murder. The threat to children's lives was manifest in armed conflict and foreign occupation, a topic that had been totally ignored in the report. Even in paragraph 9, which contained a list of settings in which violence against children had been addressed, no reference had been made to the many Lebanese and Palestinian children who were refugees or internally displaced persons. Ms. Mayo Puala had said that children no longer accepted the excuses of the perpetrators of violence against children. It was time for adults to say the same.

34. **Mr. Ballestero** (Costa Rica) said there was no doubt that today's society was a sick society, in which the weakest and most vulnerable sectors in rich and poor countries alike were victims of violence. The problem was endemic. The diagnosis had been made and now the remedy must be found. The study exemplified what could be done in the multilateral arena, in which the United Nations had progressed from an organization that had originally focused on States to one that now focused on individuals. He asked the Independent Expert to ensure that the same change would occur regarding interaction with civil society and with the children of the present and future generations.

35. **Ms. Rashed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, despite the Independent Expert's reason why the study had not addressed the issue of children in armed conflict, the matter should have received some mention, reflecting, as it did, a situation in which children found no safe haven either in their homes or in their schools. The year 2006 had been the bloodiest year so far for Palestinian children because of the actions of the occupying Power. Most of the children in the Gaza Strip were refugees, and Palestinian children were subject to violence on a daily basis, in the form of detention, forced interrogation, beatings and even torture. It was axiomatic that the well-being of children fell within the mandate of those whose job it was to protect them. She requested the Independent Expert to clarify further the reasons for the omission, especially in a year that could not be considered as having provided a world fit for children.

36. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said he welcomed the fact that the consultations that had resulted in the study had been comprehensive and had taken regional social and development issues into account. However, one dimension missing from the study was that of moral values. All religions and traditions had expressed

aversion to violence against children, and yet no legal framework relating to moral values had been included in the study.

37. His delegation welcomed the statement by Ms. Mayo Puala, given the fact that children's participation had hitherto been rather weak. In that regard, the Sudan held an annual event at which children expressed their views on issues and concerns. Follow-up to the study should not be hesitant in dealing with children living under foreign occupation in, for instance, Palestine and the Golan Heights. Since the study was the first of its kind, it should have been bolder and more thorough.

38. **Ms. Maierá** (Brazil) said that Governments should play an educating role, because no type of violence against children was justifiable, although it was ingrained in many countries as a form of discipline. Indeed, Brazil had now made it illegal to mete out corporal punishment in the home. She asked how far awareness of non-violent forms of punishment could go to prohibiting violence in all settings.

39. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children) said that it was important to involve children in any efforts to combat violence against them, particularly in the formulation of national legislation. Law, however, was not sufficient to change realities. Rather, it was a good framework for action. As policies to promote the rights of children were often scattered across several ministries, there was a need for national Governments to integrate services and monitor implementation of relevant programmes and legislation. There was also a need to establish mechanisms to report violence and improve data collection.

40. States must participate more actively in efforts to make violence against children socially unacceptable. They needed to do more, in conjunction with civil society, to change mindsets and dispel stereotypes about the role of boys and girls and men and women through awareness campaigns. Without Government intervention, it would be very difficult to bring about such change. Regarding the implementation of national strategies, he welcomed the establishment of ombudsmen. He also commended the establishment of child helplines such as the one he had recently visited in Cairo.

41. Concerning the questions raised about the protection of children in armed conflict, the study had not tackled that issue as the Security Council had a specific mandate to address it. However, he had recently met with government officials in the Gaza Strip. His forthcoming book to accompany the study would reflect what he had witnessed and treat the situation in Palestine in detail. Page limits had restricted his ability to do so in the study.

42. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization) said that several steps could be taken immediately to translate the study into practice. The first such measure was to train health workers and teachers to be able to recognize, prevent and respond to cases of maltreatment and violence against children. The causes of such violence, including alcohol abuse, social inequality and violence in the media, could also be addressed in the longer term. Another step was to continue monitoring to bring the facts to light. Best practices could be shared. He drew attention to the WHO publication *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence*. Progress had been made towards eliminating polio in the world; the same could be done with respect to violence against children. The best way to do so was to talk about the problem and to listen to children. Efforts to eliminate violence must include men and women and boys and girls alike.

43. **Ms. Andreychuk** (Canada) said that Canada valued the intersectoral work demonstrated by the collaboration of OHCHR, WHO and UNICEF and their role in the development of the study. Prevention of violence against children was most effective when sectors collaborated. The participation of young people in the development of the study was also important. Her delegation commended the statement made by the youth participant, which enabled the Committee to learn first hand about the experiences of young people. Violence against girls, boys and adolescents contravened their most basic human rights and affected their health, well-being and social development. Her Government would be working with Member States and the United Nations to ensure that the study's recommendations were put into practice.

44. **Mr. Cheok** (Singapore) said that the study was timely and comprehensive, and his delegation agreed with many of its observations. His Government had devoted significant resources to the health, safety and education of Singaporean children. Its strong record on the protection of the rights of children spoke for itself. Concerning the issue of violence, his Government had

adopted policies and a systematic framework to protect children from abuse and neglect. In addition, Singapore had participated in the consultative process for the study and had responded with detailed information to the various questionnaires.

45. While it supported efforts to protect the well-being of children, his delegation regretted that the Independent Expert had seen fit to equate the use of corporal punishment in schools with violence against children. It simply did not agree with that position. The regulated use of corporal punishment was an acceptable mode of discipline; it deterred acts of serious misbehaviour, registered the consequences of certain actions and encouraged respect for the rights of other children. The study had cited bullying, gangsterism and drug abuse among the kinds of violence which occurred among children in schools. As environments conducive to learning should be maintained in schools, it was necessary to deter such behaviour.

46. His Government's position should not be misrepresented as supporting the widespread and capricious use of corporal punishment. In Singapore, corporal punishment was meted out under clearly defined guidelines and procedures and used only as a last resort, when other measures had failed. It was considered as an option only when very serious misconduct had occurred. Such safeguards ensured that it was not abused; misuse of corporal punishment in Singapore was not tolerated.

47. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said that the report was important in that it codified, organized and processed information on violence against children. Some forms of violence against children did not receive as much attention as others. The abandonment of children, for example, might be the result of poverty, intolerance or simply despair over the lack of access to health care, education and employment. Cuts in social services were often made on the pretext that the market would resolve problems, regardless of the wishes of society. Despite their stated concern for the welfare of children, Governments often required developing countries to continue to service external debt even though, shamefully, several times the amount of the principal had already been paid. Developing countries were also often subjected to unilateral coercive measures which had a serious impact on the well-being of children.

48. Furthermore, more than $1 billion was spent yearly on weapons of all kinds. That money served to foment violence and social conflict rather than promote human rights and human development. His delegation would be grateful for further explanation of the social and economic conditions which had a direct bearing on the well-being of children and violence against them.

49. **Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone), commending the study, said that it was not enough for Governments to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child; they must also incorporate its provisions in their domestic legislation. He would therefore like to know about the kinds of assistance available from UNICEF to help countries which had not yet done so.

50. **Ms. Khattab** (Egypt), underlining her delegation's full support for the study, said that it was only a starting point for addressing the issue of violence against children directly. Follow-up was critical: rather than being carried out at five-year intervals when States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted their reports, follow-up should be on an annual basis and when crises arose. The appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children was urgent and could not await the completion of the valuable ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations human-rights-treaty bodies.

51. While the Independent Expert's mandate did not cover children affected by armed conflict, she agreed with others that the rights of children to life had been grossly violated during the recent events in Lebanon and previously in Palestine. Children had been deliberately targeted. The number of children killed during those events was much higher than the number of combatants killed. There had been serious violations of international humanitarian law. She wondered how the international community could be more effective in ensuring the protection of the rights of children in such crisis situations and how the relevant agencies and mechanisms might better coordinate their efforts. Her delegation proposed holding a conference on the protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

52. Lastly, she noted that in regional consultations in the Middle East and North Africa, children's participation had been very effective. She encouraged their continued involvement in future studies.

53. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand), commending the study and the admirable process that led to it, said that most violence against children was perpetrated by those closest to them — their parents and caregivers at home. She would therefore welcome any advice on how to manage the complex interface between the family unit and wider society. It would be useful to know whether that question had in fact been raised by children and young people in the course of the Independent Expert's consultations. Her delegation would like further details on the range of options, including the appointment of the special representative, that could ensure satisfactory follow-up.

54. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting the responses to the questions raised by the Palestinian and Lebanese delegations concerning children in armed conflict and children suffering from inhuman treatment under foreign occupation, said that her Government's position was well known and she did not wish to repeat what had already been stated. Given that the study was meant to be the first comprehensive United Nations study on all forms of violence against children, she failed to understand how it could neglect the situation of children under foreign occupation and the plight of Palestinian and Lebanese children. Her delegation hoped that that shortcoming would be rectified in future reports on violence against children.

55. **Ms. Otani** (Japan), noting with appreciation all those who had participated in the study, especially the children involved, said that, as the study on violence against children had a gender dimension, it should be considered in conjunction with the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1). She would appreciate hearing the views of the Independent Expert on the possibility of coordinating the outcomes of the two studies to promote the implementation of their recommendations.

56. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking as a mother and deploring the increasingly sophisticated means used by adults to satisfy their financial and sexual appetites through the use of children, said that it was the responsibility of adults to put an end to violence and discrimination against children. She would like further information on the specific and practical steps which Governments must take to implement the recommendations put forward in the study.

57. **Mr. Al-Muqhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that all States should implement the recommendations in the study. He would like to know what steps might be taken by civil society to train newly married couples to be good parents. Further information was also needed on the violation of the rights of the child when parents favoured one of their children over others and on the possibility that such a preference could give rise to violence against them.

58. **Mr. Srivoranart** (Thailand) said that the study constituted a landmark in terms of its broad-based, child-centred approach and comprehensive coverage of all major challenges at all levels. His delegation pledged its continued support to ensure that the study would lead to significant changes on the ground in the best interests of children. Given the importance of bringing about such changes, he would like to know what steps should be or had already been taken to strengthen the capacity of the existing network of actors at the national level to follow up the study.

59. **Mr. Horn** (United States of America) said that combating the abuse and neglect of children was not enough; what was needed was to create positive and nurturing environments for children and provide the conditions conducive to their protection. In that regard, he welcomed the emphasis in the study on the role of the family in promoting the well-being of children. That attention to the family resonated in the United States and other countries which were implementing policies to support families, with initiatives to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages and encourage responsible and loving fatherhood.

60. He recommended that follow-up efforts should concentrate on the most egregious forms of violence and abuse against children so as to make the most use of the limited resources available to help children who were most at risk. He hoped that the study would provoke concerted action for the benefit of all children.

61. He asked whether the Independent Expert could outline the most appropriate means to assess the progress being made.

62. **Ms. Wamalwa** (Kenya) said she would like to know from the Independent Expert and from the Executive Director of UNICEF whether they could suggest alternative ways to discipline children that were acceptable to different cultures and communities, noting that firm discipline was sometimes needed to keep children in line. She referred to the rites of

passage that had been introduced in Kenya as alternatives to the practice of female genital mutilation.

63. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children), replying to the questions and comments, said that an interfaith thematic seminar had been held which supported the recommendations of the in-depth study.

64. On the issue of corporal punishment, he pointed out that the study incorporated input from the Committee on the Rights of the Child and was based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There were limitations to how that issue could be addressed. He referred the Committee to general comment No. 8 (2006) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which emphasized that addressing the acceptance or tolerance of corporal punishment of children and eliminating it was not only an obligation of States parties under the Convention but also a key strategy for reducing and preventing all forms of violence in societies. More dialogue was needed to assess the consequences of the physical punishment of children.

65. He agreed that socio-economic conditions and poverty affected the well-being of children and were thus a risk factor for violence against children, as had been discussed in various regional forums.

66. The mandate of the proposed special representative of the Secretary-General (A/61/299, para. 120) was a matter for Member States to consider. That mandate should be assumed by someone with a high-level position in the international community in order to maintain the momentum of regional consultations, the involvement of countries, NGOs and the relevant agencies, including ILO, UNESCO and OHCHR. It was imperative to act swiftly in deciding on a mechanism to ensure the continuation of the current process.

67. As to the recent conflict in Lebanon, he pointed out that it had erupted after his study had been completed. He hoped that the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict would give due consideration to the suggestion regarding that situation.

68. He agreed that it was important to discuss how armed conflict affected children and welcomed Egypt's proposal to hold a conference on that issue.

69. It was important to bear in mind parenting initiatives, such as the experiences mentioned by the United States, in efforts for the protection of children. Governments and civil society played a key role in that regard. The Syrian Arab Republic's plan of action on violence against children was also a valuable contribution. He also referred the Committee to the work of Save the Children, which had published a number of reports and prepared kits to train parents on alternative approaches to children's education.

70. He agreed on the need for coordination between the work on violence against children and on violence against women, and that had been ensured in preparing his study. The common recommendations of the two relevant studies needed to be considered together.

71. He welcomed the regional follow-up consultations that had taken place in Egypt and South Asia, and the initiatives of the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States and the League of Arab States.

72. He hoped that the recommendations in the study could be implemented in the next four years, including that related to national data collection.

73. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), replying to the questions and comments, said that UNICEF had endeavoured to provide assistance to Governments and parliaments to ensure that they implemented legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and worked closely with organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on such issues as trafficking in children. Legislators should address the issues of violence against children on a global basis and identify the types of laws that would effectively protect children against various forms of violence.

74. UNICEF had a reform initiative in place to see how it could work more directly in countries to help them to pass and implement appropriate laws and regulations. She also stressed the need for effective enforcement of those laws and for the proper training of law-enforcement agencies and cooperation between them and health-care institutions.

75. With regard to alternative ways of disciplining children, that could be part of a more general, community-based approach which could also include teaching women about breastfeeding and how to care for themselves during pregnancy. Community-based initiatives were the appropriate venue for addressing cultural norms.

76. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization) said that the study and the current discussion made it clear that the situation regarding violence against children was unacceptable. The measures to address it were clear; what was needed was immediate action and collaboration across the United Nations system and with Member States.

77. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to begin its general discussion of agenda item 63.

78. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (South Africa) said that South Africa had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as other relevant international and regional instruments. The Constitution provided for the promotion and protection of children's rights, and relevant issues were addressed through the Presidency's Office on the Rights of the Child.

79. South Africa had held national and regional consultations on the study on the violence against children, and supported its recommendations in principle.

80. Among South Africa's achievements to ensure the prevention of violence against children was its abolition of corporal punishment, the adoption of the South African Schools Act to ensure safety in schools, and other initiatives to ensure that a spirit of care and support was fostered.

81. To address violence against children in the home and family, it was important to take an innovative approach, through healthy parenting, education and the empowerment of children, as that type of violence was difficult to detect. In that regard, a culture of listening to and hearing children needed to be fostered.

82. The Constitution also provided guidance in embracing different traditions and customs to promote communities that were protective of children.

83. Government ministries, with the help of NGOs, played a pivotal role in the implementation of "diversion programmes", which had helped to divert more than 150,000 children from the criminal-justice system. It was, furthermore, illegal to employ children under the age of 15, and children over that age were protected under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and other international standards such as those adopted by ILO. Nevertheless, there was a lack of regulation for children over 15 employed in the informal economy, including domestic workers and farm labourers.

84. Member States needed to make resources available and coordinate their strategies for the protection of children by sharing best practices. What was missing was the political will to implement the commitments made to eliminate violence against children in all its forms.

85. **Ms. Khan Williams** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that she agreed with South Africa on the comprehensive approach that needed to be adopted in addressing children's rights. The best way to follow up the recommendations in the study on violence against children was to conduct country-by-country reviews, in order to assess the measures that were appropriate or needed revising.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.